May 2003

Dear Whole Earth Gang-

So, I've spent the last week and a half looking at various scenarios for the future of Whole Earth, and what role the Catalog might play in these futures.

The situation, as you know, is a tough one, but not necessarily disastrous. Here are the main problems as I understand them:

- Point has significant debt and, at the moment, almost no revenue;
- *Whole Earth* is a money-losing proposition, and will continue to be unless significant capital is found to fund a circulation campaign and/ or increase advertising revenue dramatically;
- The Point/ *Whole Earth* donor base appears to be not big enough, not rich enough or not motivated enough (or perhaps some combination of the three) to make up Point's operating shortfalls;
- Charitable foundations have seemed reluctant to make major grants, either, recently – whether because of conservative granting guidelines, reluctance to fund media projects, concern about Whole Earth's stability, or just not having been approached the right way;
- *Whole Earth* is also, in my opinion, suffering a bit of an editorial identity crisis, having neither entirely galvanized its stalwart subscribers nor given a new generation reasons to regard it as required reading;
- Momentum is flagging. The current issue is three months late, the website hasn't been updated since 2001, the staff's been laid off, and, if I can be blunt, y'all on the board seem kind of burned out. Add to this the fact that being in business, even without staff, costs money, and I think it is easy to agree that time is not necessarily our friend here, that something needs to change and change quickly.

Here's where I'd like to present my brilliant business plan for how to change all this overnight. I spent most of the last two weeks trying to convince myself through organizational plans and budget scenarios that the Catalog was the way to keep publishing the Magazine, bring Point back to financial health and create a sustainable level of momentum. I've tried every way I could think of to draw a realistic plan in which the Catalog can change everything.

It won't. It won't change Point's situation overnight, and if we're unlucky it might not even make a dent over the medium-term. I think it's still worth doing.

Because with even a modicum of luck, a semi-independent Catalog project can be the cornerstone for Point building a more sustainable foundation. It'll bring in some operating funds in the short term. It'll bring in a modest income over the next two years, especially

if we solicit the aid of existing *Whole Earth* subscribers and supporters as "catalysts" (donors) for the new Catalog. If it's very successful – and one should always show up willing to be lucky – the royalties and income from future editions will be a major funding source. And above all, an editorially-successful Catalog will rebuild the Whole Earth brand and provide a sense of momentum and stability that will make *Whole Earth* attractive again to funders.

We should do a Catalog for other reasons, too, and those are the ones which weigh most heavily for me personally. I believe that past Catalogs have been tremendous tools for social change and cultural innovation, and that the planet needs extra helpings of both right now. I believe, too, that the zeitgeist is perfectly aligned for a new global WEC-like project and that it will find a ready readership. Most of all, I believe that the world will be a more beautiful, more hopeful, more interesting place with a *Global Whole Earth Catalog* in it. These reasons may or may not sway you, but they've already convinced me to do some kind of Catalog, Whole Earth or not.

Here's what I'd propose:

Create a new project under Point sponsorship to bring forth the Catalog. Have it sit under Point's nonprofit status "umbrella."

The new project (let's call it the Catalog Crew) will pass all revenues through Point, paying a 4% pass-through contribution. It could be a separate business, if convenient, or merely a separate bank account and set of legal relationships. There are tons of models for how to do this. All due fiscal responsibility will be exercised, with open books, regular reporting, and no debt being taken on without Point's permission in writing, etc.

(This is just what I'd suggest, of course): Suspend publication of *Whole Earth*. Notify subscribers that a new Catalog project and website are underway, and that subscribers are invited to join in the fun. How quickly *Whole Earth* can resume regular publication is obviously mostly dependent on the raising of money, but it may well be much easier after the Catalog is published. Perhaps that's what subscribers ought to be told.

If the Magazine resumes publication while the Catalog is underway – and I hope it does! – the Catalog Crew will have a whole mess of new content to contribute, and the Magazine can help promote the upcoming Catalog. (I do, however, suspect that the only way the Magazine can make it in the short/medium-term is for the Point board to go out and raise a lot of money from individuals. Whether the board can do this at the moment, I don't know. Perhaps one worthwhile immediate goal is to put together a board recruitment advisory committee to help identify and bring in a dozen or so new board members who have means or proven ability to raise money? Again, just a suggestion.)

The Catalog Crew will maintain the wholeearth.com website. If the Magazine starts publishing again while the Catalog is underway, we can easily accommodate that and co-promote on the site.

The Catalog Crew and Point will work together to raise Catalyst contributions, online contributions and certain major gifts and grants, and split the revenues thus generated.

In short, it'd look like this:

Income to Point:

- Half of all post-publication royalties.
- 4% of all revenues as a pass-through fee (over $25,000 in the projected budget below), for which Point agrees to handle bookkeeping and the other fiscal/ legal responsibilities of maintaining a nonprofit.
- $55,000 in estimated Catalyst and online donations, plus potential major donor and foundation income.
- A cut of any potential future foreign rights sales.

Intangibles to Point:

- Contribution to the mission: i.e., this is what Point was set up to do, to help make the world a better place by providing world-changing people access to world-changing tools.
- Renewed momentum.
- If the magazine is brought back within the next two years, it'll have access to fabulous new content.
- The website will be regularly and professionally maintained, becoming an asset again once is it handed back over to *Whole Earth*.
- Comparatively huge media attention to *Whole Earth*, and a new generation of potential subscribers in those who purchase the new catalog.

I've attached a budget and another copy of my original proposal for your consideration.

I feel awkward saying this, but it needs to be said: I'd really like to work together to bring forth a new Whole Earth Catalog, but I do want to be clear that I am continuing to move towards creation of a "non-Whole-Earth" Catalog. I have an agent and a new proposal in progress, and we're planning to begin putting the idea before publishers some time in June. These proposals are not complementary – that is, they can't both be done – and, if we're going to move forward with a Whole Earth Catalog, we need to decide that fairly quickly. This is not to apply pressure. This is simply to let you know that we think the proposal is time-sensitive, and to let you know the window we have to think about working together.

I'd love for us to find a way forward together. Can y'all give me some sense by next Monday (the 2nd) whether you think we have something worth discussing here?

I look forward to hearing your reactions. Don't hesitate to contact me with questions. My home number is 510.238.8258, feel free to call me here any time.

Thanks,
Alex

BUDGET:

The Catalog project will run roughly from July, 2003 to March, 2005. Here's an estimated budget. The numbers are middle-of-the-road projections: obviously, better revenue realities open up new possibilities, while falling short of projections will result in a more streamlined, hurried project. Figures below are rounded.

INCOME:

Earned Income:
$482,000 total from the publisher ($382,000 [450,000 minus 15% agent's cut] advance against royalties, and $100,000 production allowance – both these figures are consonant with the MWEC's, once inflation is counted in)
$50,000 online retailer exclusive sponsorship (which seems a low middle-of-the-road figure for Amazon) and/or other licensing relationships
$75,000 in foundation grants/ donations for promotion of GWEC
$20,000 in editorial-specific grants/ donations
[subtotal: 627,000, minus 4% pass-through to Point = $602,000]

Donations in Cooperation with Point/ Magazine:
$50,000 "Catalyst" presales, etc. ($100,000 NET, split 50/50 with Point)
$5,000 online donations ($10,000, split 50/50 with Point)
(other major donor/ foundation support?)
[subtotal: $55,000]

In-Kind Donations:
Publicity – assumed in this plan are a) that the publisher will make a reasonable effort to promote the book through normal mainstream channels; b) that a progressive PR firm (such as Fenton or Pyramid) will offer to take on this campaign pro-bono, or help us raise new funding to pay for their work. I have a lot of contacts in this world.
Software – assumed in this plan is the use of free software.
Offices – assumed in this plan is the donation of office space: this in turn is based on my personal experience, as I've always been able to find free space.
Hosting – assumed in this plan is that donated server space can be found: ditto.

[INCOME TOTAL: $657,000]

EXPENDITURES:

Salaries:
(all totals include 20% for taxes and benefits)
Editor* $130,000 (1.75 years @ $50,000/ year, plus $25,000 repayment for expenses and work prior to signing)
Executive Producer* $105,000 (1.75 years @ $50,000/ year)

MAY NEED MORE DESIGNERS?

Art Director* $55,000 (1 years @ $40,000/ year, $7,000 on-going contractual work)
Managing Editor* $75,000 (1.75 years @ $36,000)
Office Manager/ Librarian $34,000 (.66FTE, 1.75 years @ $24,000)
(* indicates a staffer eligible for participation in royalty sharing)
[subtotal: $399,000]

WHY OFFICE MGR NOT ELIGIBLE for ROYALTY?

Contractors:
Editor-At-Large $4,000
Online Editor* $32,000 (1.75 years, .5FTE @ $36,000) WHY * ONLY THIS ONE?
Section Editors $12,000 (six at $3,000)
Freelance Contributors $50,000
Production Assistant $14,000 (.5 year @ $24,000)
Proofreader $5,000
Indexer $2,000
Assistant Editor $10,000 (.5FTE, 1 year @ $20,000) WHY NO *?
Interns $7,000 (seven at .4FTE, nine months each, $1,000 bonuses)
[subtotal: $136,000]

Overhead:
$15,000 postage, overnighting, etc.
$20,000 Computers and tech
$11,000 Phones ($500/ mo., plus fudge)
$15,000 Travel
$3,500 Office maintenance, furnishings etc.
$5,000 Production expenses
$2,000 Office supplies
$1,000 Library expenses
$6,500 Utilities ($300/ mo +)
$5,000 staff support, morale-building, entertainment, office parties, etc.
$3,000 promotion/ launch expenses
[subtotal: $87,000]

[TOTAL EXPENDITURES: $622,000]

[INCOME MINUS EXPENDITURES: $35,000]

Editorial Timeline:

July, 2003 – September, 2003
[Note: this period may require some risk on the part of initial staff, taking on work for which they will be paid once the check clears, if the book deal goes through. I believe the staff will take on this risk if all the other signs look good.]
Agent shops the book
Scoping and outlining continue
Website relaunched
Catalyst campaign begins

October, 2003 – December, 2003
Systems set up
Section editor and major freelance assignments made
barnstorming trip
Initial publicity push
Amazon, foundations
Art direction begins

January, 2004 – August, 2004
Freelance pieces and section editors' work arrives
Rolling deadlines for chunks of the editorial
Production begins, with rolling deadlines to publisher
Website
Proofreading and Indexing

September, 2004
Production finalized. All hands on deck.
Book delivered to publisher by end of month (one year, three months from start).

October, 2004 – December, 2004
Housekeeping put in order and a brief vacation for all
Publicity tour, launch events, promotions prepared
Website

WHEN BOOK OUT ?

January, 2005 – March, 2005
Publication!
Launch events
Publicity tour
Promotions campaign

WHEN NEED FOR HOLIDAYS [7/93 for 9 & 10/93

(After March, 2005):
(On-going, low-level promotion, as appropriate. Book royalties after advance is earned back (split 50/50 with Point, after agent's fee) are mostly distributed as bonuses for staff and foreign sales, if any (split 80/20 with Point), are used to pay for work associated with foreign releases and distributed as bonuses for staff). Catalog Crew either disbands, or, if things have been a raging success with millions of copies sold, prepares to do it again.

The Global Whole Earth Catalog

A Proposal

ROUGH DRAFT

1968:

"We are as Gods and might as well get good at it. So far, remotely done power and glory – as via government, big business, formal education, church – has succeeded to the point where gross defects obscure actual gains. In response to this dilemma and to these gains, personal power is developing – the power of individuals to conduct their own education, find their own inspiration, shape their own environment, and share the adventure with whoever is interested. Tools that aid this process are sought and promoted by the Whole Earth Catalog."

2003:

"Another world is possible: the Global Whole Earth Catalog connects people to the ideas, tools and techniques for building it."

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BOOK DESCRIPTION:

Another World Is Here

It was the chant on the streets of Seattle in 1999, the talk of the halls of the World Economic Forum in 2002, the message on the signs of this year's peace marchers from Berlin to Bombay, and it's now stuck on bumpers around the planet: the deceptively simple slogan, "Another world is possible."

Inspiring this slogan is both an understanding that our systems are now truly global, and a growing awareness that they're not working as well as they could. Our planet's climate is changing and its natural systems beginning to buckle; there have never been more people living in dire poverty and desperation; our systems of global trade and governance are straining and seemingly about to fail; terrorism, chaos, genocide and dictatorship seem to be rolling back what in 1990 promised to be a global wave of democracy. Things are falling apart, and millions of people know in their bones that we can do a better job at world-building than we are; that we can create another, better world.

They're right: we can. Over the last decade, innovators around the world have birthed models and methods, prototypes and practices that can solve a huge array of the problems we face. The off-the-shelf answers now available to us could recraft the world, and a whole host of even better solutions is on its way. The problem is that, while the world needs changing, and these world-changing tools are here (with more coming soon), not enough people know they exist. "The future is here," as William Gibson writes, "it's just not well-distributed."

Luckily, we have a great tool for distributing the future: the *Whole Earth Catalog.*

Since 1968, Whole Earth Catalogs have been transforming the world, one person at a time, by introducing world-changers to world-changing tools. We've been wildly successful doing it. We've sold over three million copies, won a National Book Award and encouraged countless people to try new approaches and build their own answers.

Whole Earth Catalogs cover only the best, most useful tools, in a concise, clear and insightful way. We don't offer exposes, critiques, political rhetoric or grand theories about how the world works – instead, we offer up tools readers can use to educate themselves and form their own ideas. With several thousand pithy reviews per edition, the Catalogs also offer a browser's heaven. Their format encourages epiphany: browsing them, you find models for, solutions to, and ways of thinking about, a whole spectrum of problems that inspire you to innovate new solutions to your own.

Unfortunately, the last Whole Earth Catalog was published almost a decade ago. We need a new edition, one that take as its starting point both the amazing technological advances of the last decade and the truly global nature of our world: we need the Global Whole Earth Catalog.

Another world isn't just possible, it's here. In the GWEC, readers find the best tools, techniques and ideas for helping this new world emerge: resources from around the planet, gathered by the Catalog's global network of editors, contributors and researchers. It's one-stop shopping for those who want to understand the world in which we now live, how to change it, and how to have fun in the process – perhaps the first truly global compendium of ideas for replacing the drab, ruined future we've been handed with something dynamically sustainable, enticing and weirdly brilliant.

To that end, the Global Whole Earth Catalog integrates the latest information on the best tools from the past thirty-five years – old favorites, from solar power and environmental restoration to building communities (online or in the neighborhood) and educating without schools – with the best, most vital solutions emerging today.

Here are the field reports, recommendations, and reviews, from Amazonian villagers blazing new trails to sustainable development and Dutch green energy entrepreneurs, from Indian advocates of appropriate biotechnology and Finnish pioneers of the free software movement, from the "soulful warriors" of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation movement and the distributed, emergent collaborators of SETI@Home.

Here are the tools for doing the big jobs: for alleviating poverty and mitigating disasters while laying the groundwork for sustainable prosperity; for building cities that restore nature and build community while housing swelling populations; for making energy, water and transportation systems that have next to no impact on nature; for fighting corruption, crime and terrorism; for creating just global governance and spreading democracy and human rights to every corner of the planet.

But here, too, are the tools for the more personal job of living better: for learning and growing and being inspired; for being an effective global citizen; for expressing yourself in the media, over the Net or through the arts; for finding shelter, transportation and food that match your principles; for building workplaces that foster creativity and fairness; for falling in love and raising children and growing old with passion; for changing the world, by starting with yourself.

Finally, here are a range of tools for a variety of circumstances, from families of disaster refugees to Dot.Com survivors. For one thing we now know is that understanding the conditions faced by others is not just a nice idea – it is a precondition for making good choices. Innovation and inspiration are not the sole province of the globally well-off; neither are grit and determination limited to those facing the worst of circumstances. We suggest resources that'll let you change your own life (whether you're battling for survival or seeking sustainable prosperity), change your community, and help steer the evolution of a global system of cooperation and collaboration. We all have insights to offer, and we can all learn from the answers at which others have arrived.

Technology informs every page of the Global Whole Earth Catalog, but new tools are not necessarily high-technology. Sure, we all need to understand the uses (and dangers) of biotechnology, the Internet, ubiquitous computing, artificial intelligences, "open source" software and nano-materials. But we also need to know how best to collaborate, how to build coalitions and movements, how to grow communities, how to make our businesses live up to their highest potential and how to make the promise of democracy into a reality. We need to understand techniques as well as technologies, ideas as well as innovations. How we work together is as important as the tools we use.

Whole Earth is no longer alone in our concerns. It is in part a testament to the foresight of our coverage of previously cutting-edge ideas (from solar power to the Internet, from the Gaia hypothesis to the technological Singularity) that such ideas are now well-debated in the mainstream media. Now our job is to both bring a new generation of ideas, tools and techniques to the fore, and to cut through the glut of information out there to highlight the best information available on our more widely-shared concerns.

Looking at past sales figures, the Catalogs that sold big were the Main Events: The comprehensive Catalogs of 1968, 1980 and 1994. In the decade since the last one, the planet has

changed. The opportunity here is not merely to produce an updated version, or a spin-off. The opportunity is to recreate THE Whole Earth Catalog afresh, to acquaint long-time readers with emerging solutions, while introducing a whole new generation to what many people consider the most important tool for continuous learning available today in a single volume.

BOOK CONTENTS:

The Catalog has traditionally been divided into fields (Understanding Systems, Community, Communications, Nomadics, etc.). We've updated our traditional fields and added new ones. Each will be introduced by an innovator in that field, and accompanied by a handful of short stories exploring good models for taking action. Here is a sample of some of the fields we cover:

YOU ARE HERE: Understanding the Universe and the Planet

Rule number one is know where you are. Here's a guide to placing yourself within the larger physical systems – from the Universe to the Ecosystem – in which you live. We include old stand-bys, like the Bioregion Quiz, but also cover gleaming new ideas from String Theory to Space Elevators.

ECOLOGY AND SYSTEMS

Whole Earth midwifed the birth of the current concern for ecology and the environment, back when such terms rang new to the ears. Now there's a glut of eco-news and information. Some of it is knowledgeable, responsible, and intelligent. Much is not. Years of research and attention have taught us how to tell the difference.

We're headed into what biologists call the Sixth Extinction – a loss of biodiversity unseen since the dinosaurs had an unfortunate visit from a meteor. So understanding whole systems, practicing restoration and preserving forest, reef and wetland habitats are still vital. But in this new world, you also need to know about dramatic rescue techniques (like frozen zoos and the cloning of extinct species) and newly-understood threats like climate change and endocrine disruptors. Luckily, while we've never put more stress on the Earth, we've also never understood it better: and we cover ecological breakthroughs from the microbial life of clouds to the deep, hot biosphere.

UNDERSTANDING GLOBALIZATION

We live in a global society. Understanding the systems through which that society functions (or doesn't) – from the UN to the children of Bretton Woods (like the IMF, World Bank and WTO) to security arrangements like NATO – is now key to their success or failure. At the same time, we need the best available tools for understanding the forces moving these systems: economic globalization, population growth, poverty and development, war and terrorism. Here are the tools for assembling our own understandings of the big picture.

UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Whole Earth has long understood that science and technology are the engines driving the world in which we live. If anything, they're more important now. We were covering ideas like solar power, the personal computer and the Internet when describing them as fringe ideas would have been charitable. Now that we're deep into interlocking revolutions in computation, biotechnology,

nanotechnology and robotics, the need for science serve to the public interest has never been more vital. We'll help the reader understand how to ask the right questions, and tell the visionaries and credible critics from the hysterics.

SYSTEM FAILURES

The best systems fail sometimes, and our current system is far from the best. Understanding how we can help we when disaster strikes (in distant parts of the world or close to home) is knowledge that every person should have. We provide tools for understanding why disaster strikes, as well as key information on how to handle disasters at home and respond to system failures abroad, be they Greenhouse cataclysms (like "Wexelblat disasters"), famines, genocide or floods of refuges. We also cover disaster-avoidance, from the Precautionary Principle to models from the world of computer security, such as security-in-depth, fail-safes and brittle vs. robust security systems. A worst-case survival guide for the planet.

BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY

One of the more gratifying successes of previous catalogs is the fact that environmentally sustainable design has gone from one of our freaky ideas to one of the major fields of human endeavor. In the past we suggested ways for mitigating your lifestyle's worst impacts on the planet. We all now know this is not enough, that nothing short of a complete replacement of the technologies of the twentieth century will save us from disaster. The coming world needs not just recycling bins, but windfarms, hydrogen cars, green buildings, beautiful and efficient appliances and responsible biotechnology. Luckily, such redesigns are not only possible, they're out in stores. We'll guide readers through the best, most elegant technologies and practices for providing shelter, power, water, food, transport, and waste disposal, whether you live in New York City or Nairobi.

POLITICS

Whole Earth has never taken a partisan political position, but we remain committed to getting political tools in the hands of citizens. Indeed, trying to practice democracy on a global scale demands that we get the best available political tools into as many hands as possible as quickly as possible. We'll bring it all – from brilliant models (like The International Campaign to Ban Landmines – the first distributed project to win a Nobel) to essential techniques learned at the polls, in the streets and online. The care and feeding of democracies.

EXPRESSION: FREE SPEECH, MEDIA, ART, FASHION AND CULTURE

If you want to change the world, seize the means of expression. Here are the tools for producing knowledge, reporting and broadcasting the news as you see it, and expressing your visions and ideals. Here's how to "rip, mix and burn" your own media, throw a festival, publish a blog, build a pirate radio station, set up a village satellite uplink or a community Wifi net, organize a street-theater troupe, and create your own fashions. Here also is access to the best creative expression our new world has to offer, from Bollywood to Burning Man, Rai and Norteca to Anime and Tokyo street fashion (*Fruits*); Art pranks and culture jamming to media-tweaking protest techniques from the Ruckus Society; the video game culture of mods to the worldwide movement to preserve and pass down traditional arts and culture.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration is one of the true revolutions of the last decade. Never before has it been easier for people distributed around the world to work together. Never before have we had better models of collaboration to imitate. Never before have we had better tools to use. We cover it all: free software to smart mobs, distributed projects (like SETI@home) to cutting-edge group facilitation techniques, P2P fileswapping to copyleft, massively multiplayer games to multicultural communication. To change the world, you have to work together. We'll show you how.

INNOVATION

When things are changing fast, learning how to think anew is no longer a hippie ideal, it's an essential skill. Here are tools for thinking about the world in an innovative fashion; for seeing problems in a new light; for anticipating the futuristic present through scenarios, simulations and science fiction; for understanding trends, social epidemiology and coolhunting; for building new mindsets. We were doing this stuff when the only people thinking about it either wore buckskins and drove microbuses or lived at the extremophile fringes of the Academy. We know the lightning from the lightning bugs.

WORK

The corporation is to our world what the church was to the world of our ancestors – nearly everyone belongs to one, or at least has to regularly do business with one – but that is changing at blurry speed. There's a Second Reformation underway, one that bodes well for both individuals and corporations. Now, knowing the possibilities for transforming workplaces that welcome change (employee ownership, the new trade unionism, open-books management), and reforming those which don't (shareholder activism, responsible investing, boycotts) is essential knowledge. On the other end of the spectrum, we showcase the best tools and techniques for those who work independently, from how to survive as a start-up to the best new tools for running small businesses and working at home. Along the way, we point out the best ideas about craft, calling and right livelihood. Finally, we discuss new models for global commercial interaction, from the Grameen Bank's microlending program to fair-trade networks.

COMMUNITY

Communities are the mirrors of corporations, where everything we don't pay for happens. No good life can be had without them. After decades of destroying communities, we're learning anew how to seed and care for them. Here's how to design places that bring people together; innovative programs to build social capital and reknit connections; great technologies like GPS, GIS and community monitoring that give communities the power of good information about conditions on the ground; and the best ideas about the meaning and practice of learning to live together.

NOMADICS

In the 1960s and 1970s, nomadics meant rock-bottom cheap world travel. We still point to the best resources for shoestring travelers, but now that independent travel has gone mainstream, there is a whole array of possibilities for understanding the world through direct experience. We cover the best of ecotourism, adventure travel, socially-conscious tourism, work-barter travel, travel writing and documentaries. [gear]

STATES OF MIND

Your mind, of course, is the sharpest tool of all. Here's how to hone the edge, from enhancing

human perception through mindful practices to understanding the implications of the latest neuroscientific research. Bookstores are bursting with work on personal growth: we dump the flaky and the flabby-minded, and get down to the bedrock of what's useful, new and real.

LIVING WELL

The biggest project we work on is crafting our own lives. Here are the tools for better sex and love, fertility and birth, education and child-rearing, health, aging, and death. Who doesn't want more love and better sex? Many claim to know how to get them: we cut through the come-ons and self-help trends-of-the-day to deliver the best real ideas the world has to offer. How we breed, bring up and educate the next generation is as pressing a problem as any. Here are the solutions: how to pursue education without schools (and how to reform schools that don't educate); midwifery and birthing practices, fertility strategies, family planning and raising babies; the best trans-cultural advice on keeping your family safe, healthy and happy. At the same time, extreme longevity, if not downright "functional immortality," will soon be at least theoretically possible for everyone. We pour out the snakeoil and glean the best information on how to keep yourself optimally healthy for as long as possible, how to age passionately and well, and how, if the time comes, to face death.

BOOK LENGTH and PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

11" x 14", softcover, perfect bound
450 pages
1,500 – 2,000 items reviewed, 20 original short essays, 100 profiled models
Completion: 12 months after advance received.

PHOTOGRAPHS and/or ILLUSTRATIONS:

A design which builds on the traditional Whole Earth look (of lines and rules, with illustrations lifted from the resources reviewed), but with a more active and contemporary feeling. This feeling to be achieved through design choices, the use of select four color, and the use of selected photojournalistic images.

[designed sample pages will best illustrate this...]

ACCESS/ DISTRIBUTION PARTNERSHIP(S):

The Global Whole Earth Catalog is, above all, just that: a catalog. It is meant to provide access to the resources it covers. Some of that access can be had via free websites and public libraries, but many readers will want to own copies of the books, discs and other materials they find most useful.

Previous Catalogs worked in partnership with a now-defunct company, Whole Earth Access, which provided one-stop shopping for the resources reviewed in the Catalogs. This is a great service, but one which is no longer reasonable for Whole Earth to attempt to provide itself.

This is doubly true when several excellent online merchants are already well-established. The Global Whole Earth Catalog will partner with one (such as Amazon, Powell's, or Barnes and

Noble). In exchange for a URL next to each item in the Catalog (and a link from each item on the website) directing the reader to the appropriate page at which to purchase the item from the bookseller, Whole Earth will negotiate both a serious (as in six figure) financial contribution from the bookseller and prominent placement on that bookseller's site and (where applicable) shelves.

This is a win-win-win. Items which might otherwise be difficult to find will be made readily available to readers, the bookseller will receive considerable traffic and community goodwill from Catalog readers, and the Catalog project will receive needed financial support. Whatsmore, such a relationship seems quite feasible: indeed, a conversation about how such a relationship might be structured has already been begun with a Senior Manager for Public Relations at Amazon.Com.

THE TEAM: EXECUTIVE PRODUCER?

Alex Steffen, editor

Bruce Sterling, editor at large

Emily Polk, managing editor NOT AVAILABLE

Jamais Cascio, online editor

Contributing Editors, Section Editors and other contributors: Howard Rheingold (collaboration), Alan AtKisson (sustainability), Holly Morris (nomadics), Mille Bojer (Africa/ development), Zaid Hassan (the Subcontinent), Caroline Casey (mythology and cultural activism), Christine Glauber (Brazil, South America), JC Herz (games, innovation), Kevin Danaher (trade), KU Bergmann (architecture and design), Natalie Jerimajenko (the arts), Cory Doctorow (blogosphere), Adam Greenfield (Japan), Zhou Weihui (China), Robbyn Kistler (Russia), Charlie Stross (open source), Vicki Robin (work and personal finance) [etc., etc., etc.] and, we hope, Mike Stone, Peter Warshall, J. Baldwin, and other stalwarts.

APPENDIX ONE – THE PROCESS:

How to Swarm a Whole Earth Catalog:

[need to make clear that editorial team will still write or commission probably 90% of the work, but that this is how we get the last 10% that transforms it from good and interesting to great and transcendent...]

One might well balk at the difficulty of finding good contributors from around the planet, soliciting their considered opinions on the best cutting-edge ideas, tools and techniques, and compiling and editing these contributions into a compelling, fun catalog.

Perhaps it simply couldn't have been done ten years ago. It can now.

Two facts make it possible: the increasingly global nature of the Internet and the spread of models for massive, distributed collaboration. It is now demonstrably possible – since others have done it – to network large groups of like-minded, smart people, encourage their contributions to large projects, and use their aggregated wisdom to select for usefulness and credibility.

How might the GWEC go about doing this? Here's a working model, based on the Slashdot ("News for Nerds") and Kuro5hin (an online "community of people who like to think") websites.

Here's how it works. We put up a website. Anyone can register as a participant by providing an email address. The website consists of three components – a front page (actually multiple pages on different topics, but bear with me), a slushpile, and a discussion area.

The front page acts like the catalog's table of contents – sort of a draft, work-in-progress version of the catalog, divided into the appropriate catalog sections. Each section page holds the latest released versions of the entries in that section. (Each section also has a comment field, an area where participants can comment on the conception of the section as a whole.)

Each entry can be viewed in two ways: as plain text (the latest edited version) or in mark-up (where participants authorized to do so may suggest changes, Wiki-like). Each entry also has a comment field.

New entries are included in one of two ways – internally or collaboratively.

Internal contributions are made by staff contributors, and approved by editors.

Collaborative contributions can be made by any participant. They are not included in the catalog's front pages, though, until they have been "voted" on the front page through a process of accumulating enough positive responses from the community's moderators.

In such a system, contributions and comments on them are rated by community monitors. Their ratings can vary from, say -1 to 5 (as Slashdot's do).

Any contribution which has a rating of 5 for a certain period of time would then be added to the catalog for purposes of discussion and review (there would have to be a caveat somewhere that the editors reserve the right to make the final cut – but if the system is designed and used well enough, they shouldn't have to evoke that right too often).

Here's how Slashdot does it:
"Slashdot implements an automated system to select moderators from the pool of the users. Moderators are selected according to several criteria; they must be logged in (not anonymous), they must be regular users (selects users who use the site averagely, not one time page loaders or compulsive users), they must have been using the site for a while (defeats people who try to sign up just to moderate), they must be willing, and they must have positive "karma". Karma is a number assigned to a user that primarily reflects whether the user has posted good or bad comments (according to ratings from other moderators). If a user meets these criteria, the program assigns the user moderator status and the user gets five "influence points" to review comments. The moderator rates a comment of his choice using a drop down list with words such as "flamebait" and "informative". A positive word increases the rating of a comment one point and a negative word decreases the rating a point. Each time a moderator rates a comment it costs the moderator one influence point, so the moderator can only rate five comments for each moderating period. The period lasts for three days and if the user does not use the influence points, they expire. The moderation setup is designed to give many users a small amount of power – thus decreasing the effect of rogue users with an axe to grind or with poor judgment."

"Comments are accredited by the rating they receive through moderation. If a user sets a high threshold level, they will only see posts that are considered high quality by the moderators. Users

receive accreditation through their karma. If their posts consistently receive high ratings, their karma will increase. At a certain karma level, their comments will start off with a rating of 2 thereby giving them a louder voice in the sense that users with a threshold of 2 will now see their posts immediately. Likewise a user with bad karma from consistently poorly rated comments can lose accreditation by having their posts initially start off at 0 or –1. At the –1 level, the posts will probably not get moderated, effectively removing the opportunity for the "bad" poster to regain any karma."

In this way, problem participants are "eldered" off the system. Slashdot also uses "troll filters" to prevent spamming and abuse: no more than one post per minute, no identical posts, and short- and long-term banishments for those who are willfully disruptive or are moderated below a certain level several times in a row.

Whatsmore, in-house moderators (editors at GWEC, etc.) can be given more "influence points" in order to provide a system check and help guide the process.

Building such a system is not hard. Indeed, the code to Slashdot's site is freely available for anyone to use.

(Initial recruitment of participants can be a problem: there are various strategies around this. One is simply doing a good job in getting the word out that the catalog effort is underway. This can easily be done by doing an initial earned media effort, mailing the exiting Whole Earth community, and partnering with appropriate online communities like the WELL. Another is by making "Blogistan" – the network of people around the world who publish their own online journals and "weblogs" (or "blogs") – active partners in the process, and actively recruiting bloggers to join the effort. A third is by contacting an initial list of people whom the catalog would like to have as contributors and participants and facilitating their joining the site. There are others)[global BINGO's and foundations][recruitment trip][Viridian List, Pioneers of Change, WEF's Global Leaders for Tomorrow, etc.]

The role of community facilitators is also key. Self-moderation technologies work. But you get better, more frequent, and less divisive posts if there is a small paid staff of facilitators actively involved in soliciting such posts and keeping the peace. While everyone working on the catalog will be responsible for participating in the online community, a small staff whose sole job it is to make sure the community is working, and working well, will be necessary.

Setting the context and the culture for the project are also important. This can be accomplished by: "stocking" the system with known participants to build up some common ground before the system goes public; having paid moderator/facilitators; being clear about goals, vision and criteria – allowing access to "the cultural source code" [include a tutorial on how to think in a GWEC manner]; and consciously rewarding people who get it and do good things.

Here it might be worthwhile to mention that face-to-face culture is important, too. The more people get to know each other, the higher the quality of their interactions will be. Here are the suggestions for this so far:

- Have a great team of people, who each understands part of their job is to build community.

- Have an initial conference of editors, advisors, identified participants, etc. to flesh out the initial categories and get the ball rolling.

- Do a global recon tour, traveling around the world to find and recruit remarkable people to participate, and/or have a participant (or group thereof) who go out virtually recruiting.

- Have an office that encourages drop-ins and lingering, that's fun and creative.

- Encourage conversation groups of participants in various cities to form. [like "meet-up"]

A Note about Rights:

(There will also have to be a clear permission in the sign-in that by using the system, you give GWEC the right to use your ideas (with attribution), and, if you agree, your words (with pay))

Employ a Creative Commons license for the work, allowing non-commercial reproduction of anything found on the website. Avoids charge that GWEC and Point are trying to skim the creativity of the group for profit: it ensures the goodwill of the participants. But it also can prove to be a dynamic marketing tool in its own right. As several examples have shown, "leading with the free" – that is, giving away much of the content, often in relatively undigested forms – means that many, many more people end up examining that content, and (if it's good enough) many of those will decide they want the more polished commercial form. Sales go up when you give a part of it away. [An example of this is Cory Doctorow's Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom; but many, many think tanks, academic institutions, small presses and independent media outlets use the model, too]

The Role of the Editors:

The editors' first role is to set the vision for the catalog: what we'll discuss and why. Afterwards, they will select the best material which arises from the online discussions, add it to material generated in-house and mix them both with solicited work from outside contributors and sub- (or contributing-) editors. Whenever possible, these contributions will be vetted on the website, with participants actively encouraged to suggest additions, note possible errors, and so on.

However, final authority for selection and editing of all material lies with the editors. The website is a conversation in which all can participate, and is thus as democratic as can be managed. The catalog, however, is a particular take on that conversation, and is more a benign collaborative dictatorship.

Post-Publication Swarming:

The usefulness of the website doesn't end with publication, though.

[Updates. (Can also be used for later editions)]

It's a conversation, and the discussion doesn't end just because we've brought out the catalog. Indeed, we want it to accelerate. We want more people to be hitting the site, contributing ideas, commenting on the catalog and its contents, suggesting items for future editions and so forth.

[We think it's so important that we'll be seeking charitable funding for continuing the maintenance and operation of the site for at least two years after the publication of the catalog so that we can insure the conversation continues. Or can we actually, better yet, include it in the

advance – or at least get a commitment for a sizable donation from the company to the on-going publication of the site, "as a sign of how much we *believe* in this book"??]

[In fact, it'd rock to plan a barnstorming tour on publication much more interesting and comprehensive than a regular tour, aimed at revving up a culture around the site as well as doing traditional media interviews and signings and such]

[It'd be fun to build a function into the website of "build your own GWEC", where participants could rebuild the catalog as they would have, a sort of MyCatalog. Everybody loves to play armchair editor.]

For that conversation has real, measurable benefits. There is a huge group of people out there who will take immediately to these ideas, but won't hear about the Catalog until it's published. The more people hit the site, compile their MyCatalogs, and engage in that conversation, the more they'll tell their friends, talk it up at parties, and send their peeps links from it. Not only about the inspiring ideas, cool tools and interesting discussion they found there, but, more generally, about the Catalog itself. This is what makes the catalog into a publishing event. This is what turns a book that's very important to one group of people into an Important Book. This is also, on the most bluntly practical level, what we might call "word-of-modem" publicity that money can't buy. Conversation is the driving spirit. Conversation is the best publicity. Conversation changes the debate. And because conversation is how people get their most trusted information on what's worth buying, conversation sells books – a lot of books.